



DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Kalamazoo DHS feted as Goodwill partner of the year

From Sherry Thomas-Cloud, Director

Kalamazoo County DHS, Kalamazoo

ThomasCloudS@michigan.gov

Kalamazoo DHS was awarded the "Community Partner of the Year" award earlier this year by Goodwill Industries. Following is the official text from their award:

"Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services, formally known as Family Independence Agency and Department of Social Services, has been a longstanding partner with Goodwill Industries providing a wide variety of family services since early 1980s with the Grant Diversion Program for job-seeking skills and placement services. And, in the early 1990s, we joined them for the Success In Employment Program. We cooperatively worked together to provide job readiness, and work experience for participants on public assistance.

"Since then, DHS and Goodwill have been collaborative partners in a variety of programs to provide employment and retention services for public assistance recipients through work force development programs such as Work First, Non Cash Recipient, and Food Assistance. We have been involved with a number of joint partnerships to provide pre-vocational readiness and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities and barriers to employment.

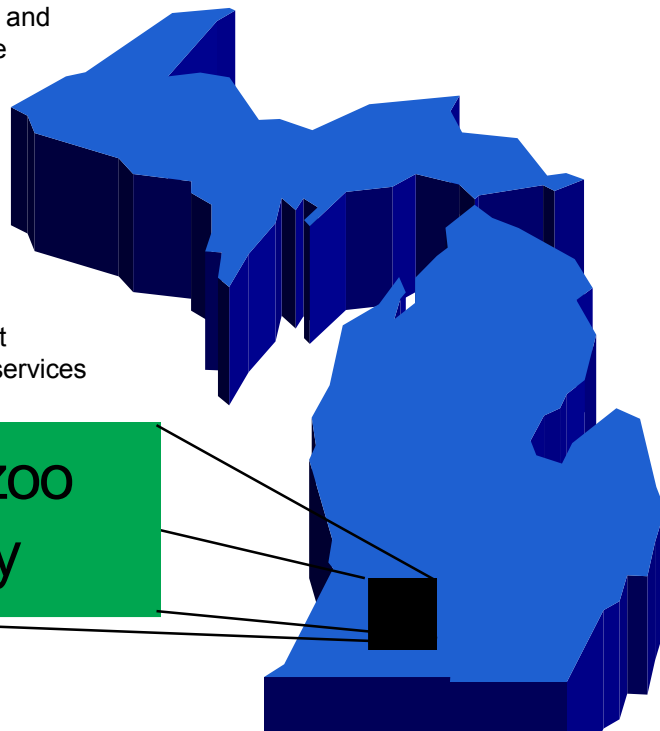
"Additionally, for the past four years, we have joined Housing Resources Inc. and DHS to provide housing stabilization, employment retention services, and wraparound case management services through our MakingITWork partnership.

"One of the most successful partnerships over the past several years has been our Workers on Wheels partnership with DHS. This initiative, putting reliable transportation in the hands of participants for employment retention, has excellent results.

"Together, we have weathered many political storms – both Democratic and Republican – many successful and failed legislative initiatives, budget cuts, budget shifting and budget eliminations.

"We have survived together mounting caseloads, staff capacity issues, unmet needs and political firestorms of opinion about people on and off public assistance. We work side by side in community initiatives, focus groups, and action forums. We share with DHS our resources, our concerns for the people we serve, and our frustrations regarding opportunities available for our participants.

"We all grateful for our local DHS leader, Sherry Thomas-Cloud. We are grateful that she and her staff step up to serve participants with dwindling resources and make our partnership a priority. We look forward to many more years working side by side to improve employment and training resources for the people we serve. We are please to present DHS the Goodwill Partner of the Year."



Click to read...

Local office stories.....2-3

Your letters.....4

Traditions flourish at Greenfield-Joy District

From Sandra Szeliga, Program Manager
Wayne County Greenfield-Joy District, Detroit
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For more than two decades the men and women of the Greenfield-Joy District office in Wayne County have expressed their appreciation for each other by hosting luncheons on the Friday before Mother's Day and Father's Day.

What started out as a simple cake and ice cream acknowledgement by the men of the office two decades ago has blossomed into catered meals for the women and sit-down steak dinners for the men. All staff at Greenfield have dipped into their own pockets to come up with the funds to sponsor these events and have found great pleasure in being "waited on" for their meal.

The ratio of men to women in the office is about 3-1 in favor of the women but never has it been said that those statistics have deterred the men from providing an outstanding spread for the ladies. This year, the men served a delicious catered meal of spaghetti, chicken wings, salad, breads, beverage and dessert on May 12. The women reciprocated June 16 by preparing a delicious meal of grilled steaks, rice, salad, rolls, beverage, lemon pie and cheesecake for the men. Over the years, many of the faces of the participants have changed but the camaraderie continues and Greenfield-Joy staff continues to show their appreciation for each other in extraordinary ways.



Allegan County DHS staff (above) enjoyed a free casual day June 2 during the Detroit Pistons-Miami Heat NBA conference semifinal games to celebrate Piston's spirit. [LuAnn Smith](#), Allegan County ITT, arranged a group photo of diehard fans. She said: "Good and bad news... We made it on the site - some were cropped off the picture...(sorry about that, but we appreciated the spirit!) Oh...the worst news...the Pistons didn't win but thanks to everyone for participating." The photo appears on the Pistons Web page – www.detroitpistons.com – under "Fan Faces". It is photo No. 8.

– from [Susan M. Bailey-Carman](#)



Livingston County DHS management team and DHS board members. Front l-r: **Doris Ostrander**, DHS board member, **Jeanette Freeland**, department analyst, **Robert Davidson**, services supervisor, and **Traci Martin**, services supervisor. Back l-r: **Rebecca Lybrink**, office manager, **Nancy Rosso**, board member, **Pam Holman**, program manager, **Janet Wylie**, FIM, **Susan Fulton**, director, **Terese Gainer**, Family to Family coordinator.

Livingston County management appreciation breakfast

From Ann Koivisto, Family to Family TDM Facilitator
Livingston County DHS, Howell
KoivistoA@michigan.gov

In response to the staff appreciation casual days and the lunch events of the week of May 1-5, Livingston County DHS employees prepared a "Management Appreciation Breakfast" on May 23 to thank our director, **Sue Fulton**, the board of directors and the entire Livingston County DHS management team.

Staff brought in breakfast food and prepared a table in the kitchen where the managers could enjoy their breakfast. We believe that it is important to acknowledge managers for all they do to support their staff. We are fortunate to work for such a professional, caring and dedicated management team.

Time capsule

What made news in DHS newsletters over the years
July 1987, 19 years ago, in DSS "No Name" Newsletter

John Smith of Departmental Services Administration addressed state employees: retirement. **"'80 and out' plan approved by Legislature"** was the headline. "Senate Bill 315, amending the State Employees Retirement Act, has passed both houses of the Legislature and at press time was awaiting the governor's signature," Smith wrote. "The bill's primary feature is an '80 and out' plan for early retirement without reduction of benefits."



Getting healthier in Detroit!

Wayne County McNichols-Goddard District completed its "Six Weeks To Wellness" get active and fit program. The program ran from April 10-May 19, 2006. Participants shared in Lunch and Learn seminars from guest speakers sharing tips and information on health and fitness.

Guest speakers included Dr. Cheri Anderson (health and lifestyle coach), Andre Plummer (personal trainer), Jennifer Clements (self care consultant), Kimya Scott and Shakira Scott (weight loss motivational speakers). An awards ceremony was held May 24 where certificates, award ribbons and T-shirts and a healthy lunch was provided for 2006 "Be Active for Life" members. **— from Suzette Coklow**

Date: June 14
To: David Scott, Family Independence Manager
Midland County DHS, Midland

Subj: Karen Siver

I am writing to you to tell you that I have had the extreme pleasure of having Karen Siver as my case worker. Karen is the kindest and (most) efficient professional I have encountered in my life!

She has always cared, had my best interest at the top of the list, and (is) always one step ahead of me.

Karen has never made me feel like a loser and she is very understanding (of) my unfortunate circumstances. Karen is a definite asset to the state of Michigan and I thank her for being there and caring for me! She is awesome!

Diana Grate

Midland

■ *Karen Siver is an eligibility specialist with Midland County DHS. Richard Burmeister, Midland County TANF program manager, submitted this letter for publication.*

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

Date: June 5
From: Georgia Campbell, District Manager
Wayne County Child and Family Services
Central Operations, Detroit

Subj: A Mother's Day Collaboration

Almost two years ago, a person in the community asked me about the work that I did at The Guidance Center. He knew a family who had taken on three foster children and they were struggling in their new role as parents.

Since one of the foster children was a very premature infant, I suggested that the family might be interested in infant mental health services and they could call me to learn more about it. The next day the family called and I scheduled a home visit with them the following day.

The family agreed to have infant mental health services for the premature baby in their care. I began to see this family for weekly home visits. The baby began to blossom under their care. The three-year-old began to talk and the five year old reduced some of her anxiety.

On Sunday morning, Mother's day, I received a phone call from the mother. She was crying and trying to tell me that the four year old got sick, was taken to the hospital and had died. I was in shock. I had just seen the family Friday evening and everyone was well. I asked the mother if she would like me to come over and she wanted that. I spent the day doing grief work with the family.

Later that evening, the family was visited by two Department of Human Services workers (including) Mr. **Stuart Opperer**. Together, we worked to assess the situation. It was a gratifying experience to see these workers treat the family with such care and kindness. It was clear from medical and police reports that the foster family was not in any way responsible. I was so worried that the children would be removed pending a complete investigation.

The collaboration that occurred between myself, the therapist with the family, and the DHS team was remarkable. We were able to prevent another trauma (removal) for the five year old whose biological brother had died that day. Mr. Opperer was very sensitive and suggested some play therapy techniques that might help the girl with her feelings.

The DHS team and I worked together in a way that helped both of us do our jobs keeping the respect of the family front and center.

Carol Oleksiak, LMSW

The Guidance Center, Detroit

■ *The Guidance Center is a Downriver Community Mental Health provider and one of Wayne County's community partners in Family to Family. Stuart Opperer is a services specialist with Wayne County Central CFS.*

DHS Matters! is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services
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